

A Newsletter From Edwards Consulting Firm, Inc. Helping Business Leaders Manage Their Careers and Their Resources

One-on-One

Relationship Building: A Company's Foundation



Gina Wright took Atlanta by storm as a 27-year old, when, in 1997, she published *Business to Business* magazine, the first title of The Leader Publishing Group, Inc., quickly followed by *Catalyst*, *Atlanta Jewish Life* and *Atlanta Woman*, and the establishment of a custom publishing division, Leader Custom Media. Atlanta's top CEOs, senior managers and professionals in the areas of politics, philanthropy and academia, as well as business, are among the publications' consistent readers.

With the March 2002 naming of Elisabeth Marchant to the position of CEO and President of The Leader Publishing Group, Wright moved out of the day-to-day business responsibilities of the company, while remaining as Chairman of the Board, thus giving her more time to look for strategic acquisitions throughout the Southeast.

Wright is a 1991 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She also graduated from Harvard Business School in May 2004 in their Owners/President Management Program. She serves on the Boards of The Carter Center, the Brain Injury Association of Georgia, the Association of Corporate Growth and Camp Sunshine. In 2000, she established a charitable foundation for her company, the C50 Foundation, which contributes \$50,000 annually to philanthropic organizations in Atlanta.

Conscious Communication:

Why is relationship building important to a business leader, whether he or she is the business owner or a corporate executive?

Wright:

Business is all about relationships, particularly so in the South. People like to do business with people they like, people they respect and have a strong regard for. If your customers make a decision about your product, you are going to be more successful

Welcome to our Fall Edition!

"Relationships of trust depend on our willingness to look not only to our own interests, but also the interests of others."

-Peter Farquharson

Conscious Communication is dedicated to quarterly providing our clients, career seekers and professional networks with valuable human capital management strategies and career tips.

How often have we heard that "Relationships" are the key to how a marquee account was closed, a promotion obtained, or one's life kept just a little more balanced than our own?

Yes, you guessed it! This quarter's newsletter is about relationships. Here you will find the answers to: How do I build strategic relationships? How do I make more time for networking activities? What is NetWeaving? How can I live a more balanced life?

Gina Wright, who is no stranger to networking and who built an Atlanta media empire from scratch, is the focus of this issue's One-on-One. Bob Littell coined the term "NetWeaving" to describe a meaningful way to network. To achieve balance, we turn to Bob Lancer for further insight into relationships and self.

You are invited to share this newsletter with your colleagues and friends. They may register at www.edwardsconsultingfirm.com, to benefit from our executive search and contract services. And . . . , we welcome your feedback and ideas for future issues of *Conscious Communication*.



Best regards,

Damali
Damali Edwards
Founder and CEO

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if you have a strong relationship with them. I think people are more apt to buy a mediocre product from someone they have a strong relationship with, than a strong product from someone they have a mediocre relationship with; people are going to make decisions on people, more than on the product.

Conscious Communication:

How would you define strategic relationship building?

Wright:

First of all, you have to put out an agenda. Any strategy starts with an objective or an agenda. The way we go about it, for example with our woman's magazine, we may want to ask: "Whom do we want to align with? What is our objective or mission as a magazine?" Then identify other folks with a similar mission.

Conscious Communication:

What would you say to those who say they don't have time to network?

Wright:

They'd better make time! It is one of the most critical things you can do to grow your business. I know everyone is busy, but you absolutely have to make time to network. If you support my fundamental belief about relationships and products, you have to get very serious about networking. The key in relationship building, whether it is personal or professional, is honesty and integrity. But what I've found especially in the higher ranks of executive leadership is humility. This goes back to some of our core values at Leader Publishing, in checking your ego at the door.

Conscious Communication:

What advice would you give a rookie or even a veteran on building strategic relationships from scratch?

Wright:

The secret is to remove the fear. That may be hard to do, but we are in Atlanta, Georgia, one of the most hospitable cities on this planet; no one is going to be rude to you. This city supports the Golden Rule; we treat others the way we want to be treated and that is how Atlantans do business.

Conscious Communication:

As an entrepreneur, in order to grow revenue, you had to build relationships externally for your firm, but what about internal growth? What are your thoughts on relationship building within an organization?

Wright:

I think the most important thing any CEO can carry is a positive attitude and strong sense of self, to know one's own strengths and weaknesses. We are firm believers in team building. It is critical for us that we have really, really good people skills. One of the things we teach at Leader Publishing is to check your ego at the door. Everybody is in the same place – we all clean the refrigerator and make the coffee. In our work, we believe we are the best at what we do and it is important to carry that attitude outside the office. So, we go out there with a tremendous amount of confidence, but once you walk back into the office, everybody is on the same plane.

Conscious Communication:

With that said, how do you define leadership? What makes a leader?

Wright:

Humility. Grace under pressure. A positive attitude. You lead by example and are not afraid to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you are.

Conscious Communication:

Finally, what's next for Gina Wright?

Wright:

Right now I'm taking some time off, but I'm also eager to get back in the saddle again to figure out what we want to do next. We now have a team of associates here that I can consult about our growth and about the role I can play to benefit the company. There are a number of opportunities . . .

Conscious Communication:

And you'll come back to our readers when you've made a decision?

Wright:

Of course!

Connect Your Career

One Connection at a Time

by Bob Littell



Whether you're in a job search, considering a move, or already comfortably established in a great position, learning how to build better and more lasting relationships is an invaluable skill that CAN be learned.

Traditional networking — meeting people at an event, having a brief conversation and exchanging business cards — amounts to not much more than playing hooky from work and ultimately fails. It is naive to believe

that such networking leads to quality referrals and actual business.

NetWeaving, by contrast, reverses the process that encourages people to only look out for their own interests and needs. NetWeaving trains people to listen with "a second pair of ears" — to listen to the needs, problems and opportunities of others — and then suggest connections and resources to meet those needs, solve those problems and enhance those opportunities. It isn't for everyone; unless one genuinely derives satisfaction from helping others, with only an indirect expectation of personal benefit, NetWeaving will still be seen as networking. Those who discover the joys of NetWeaving find that it not only creates more long term benefits than traditional networking does, but they

also learn that all other activities become energized, as many more lasting relationships are created.

The key to success is to have a one-on-one meeting after the first encounter, as soon as possible, to explore areas of common interest and to begin building a relationship of trust. At this meeting, assuming you now feel confident in the other person, you begin scrolling through your mental database, to suggest possible connections and resources for the other person. He or she, in the majority of cases, will reciprocate. These connections you make for each other and resources you provide to each other are what will cement the foundation of your relationship building process. From this point forward, you make sure that you keep the other person's needs, problems and opportunities in mind and find ways of keeping in touch.

As a NetWeaver, let me assure you that "good things happen to people who MAKE good things happen".

Bob Littell, Principal of Littell Consulting Services, has more than 30 years of experience in sales and marketing in the financial services industry. During his career, he has identified the skill sets and habits of people with successful careers: they are relationship builders, derive pleasure from connecting people with each other, and are amazing resources for others. He is the author of "The Heart and Art of NetWeaving", and may be contacted via his Web site, www.netweaving.com

A Balanced Life

Peace, Poise and Power

by Bob Lancer

Having a balanced life means that you spend enough time doing what you really want to do. It means that you have enough energy and emotional strength to fully enjoy whatever you experience. It means that you spend enough time with loved ones and friends and enough time in solitude, exploring your self and uncovering life's deeper meaning. Having a balanced life means that you work enough, rest enough, play enough and pray enough.

The key word for achieving balance is "measure". When you do everything in the right measure, you experience that state of harmonious power and peace we call "balance".



Balancing begins with realizing how you have caused yourself to lose your balance. Your thinking process plays a crucial role here. We presume that we think constructively, while at the same time we blame circumstances or other people for the excessive pressures we place upon ourselves. If you feel that you are being held back from leading a totally balanced and fulfilling life, you can trace that feeling back to a depressing way of thinking that you have imposed upon yourself. Drop the idea that you cannot experience the

completely fulfilling sense of balance that you crave right now. Let go of your problems long enough to return to a balanced state of peace, poise and power. From there, envision your life in balance. See your home, your work and all other aspects of your life in a state of total fulfillment. Then, in a calm and confident manner, look for what you can do right now to head in that direction.

As you live, love and work in balance, pursuing your heart's desire in a balanced way, your life already is all that you want it to be.

Bob Lancer is an Atlanta based author, consultant, speaker and trainer, with more than 20 years of professional experience relating to performance enhancement in work and life. His published works, in addition to his new book, "Lighten Up! Harness the Power of Happiness to Create the Life you Want", include "Parenting with Love, without Anger or Stress" and "The Longtime Tales of Uncle Mo", a motivational children's book. He may be reached via his Web site, www.boblancer.com



Damali Edwards (Pictured on far right end), founder and CEO of Edwards Consulting Firm, Inc., speaks on executive panel on Professional Development earlier this year at Southern Polytechnic State University in Marietta, GA. Other panelists (Pictured from left to right): Jannet Thoms: Director of IT, MARTA; Don Sykes: Director of HR, Cingular Wireless; Sharon Jordan: VP of Operations, AIG; Paul Judge: CTO, Ciphertrust; Vicki Hamilton: VP of IT, The Weather Channel and Richard Sylvia: Director of Strategy & Planning, Siemens. Moderators (Not Pictured): Curtis Crowder: CEO, Syntellus; Rachel Vassel: Director of Advertising, The Weather Channel and Mark Dawson: Director of IS, Cox Enterprises.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Heart and Art of NetWeaving
by Robert "Bob" S. Littell

Lighten Up!: Harness the Power of Happiness
by Bob Lancer

Power NetWeaving: 10 Secrets to Successful Relationship Marketing
by Robert "Bob" S. Littell & Donna Fisher

Power Networking: 59 Secrets for Personal & Professional Success
by Donna Fisher & Sandy Vilas



Conscious Communication

Mission



To provide valuable human capital management strategies and career tips to our clients, career seekers and professional networks.

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